

# **IDRC-Supported Capacity Building:**

Developing a Framework  
for Capturing Capacity  
Changes

By:

Stephanie Neilson and  
Charles Lusthaus



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## Executive Summary

Building local research capacity to help developing countries become more healthy, equitable and prosperous societies is one of IDRC's three primary objectives. Over the past two years, the Centre has sought to gain a deeper understanding of how it operationalizes its capacity support and what the results of this support have been. The purpose of this paper is to (1) provide IDRC staff and managers with a useful set of tools or typologies to help them conceptualize, plan, monitor and evaluate capacity building interventions in their work and; (2) develop a framework that can capture how IDRC's support contributes to capacity development at the individual/group, organizational and network levels in the field.

Building on the previous work carried out in 2005 and 2006, the paper starts by offering a working definition of "capacity" that may be appropriate for the purpose of this framework. To provide direction for this discussion, we mapped IDRC's characteristics of capacity building in terms of whose capacity, what capacities are being built (primarily), how these capacities are being built in terms of IDRC's fundamental principles, and why these capacities are being built. The discussion then turns to how IDRC operationalizes capacity building and the numerous and wide-ranging interventions that IDRC and its partners implement in their research projects with the Centre's support.

One of the key findings from our previous study on results and factors of results (Universalia, 2006) found that the Centre's capacity support is often between IDRC's partners' partners, rather than directly between IDRC and their partners. This means that when seeking results achieved, evaluators will have to look further down the results chain towards the Centre's boundary partners' boundary partners in order to adequately capture the changes occurring. In this context, the framework will also need to capture if and how IDRC's boundary partners are building the capacities of researchers, as well as if and how IDRC is building the capacity of researchers.

Critical to the development of this framework, is the idea that IDRC program staff/managers take a multi-pronged approach to build research capacities; using the research problem as the starting point they make choices about the entry point for program support – individuals, organizations and/or networks – which abilities to provide solutions at what level? In this sense, IDRC-supported capacity is more than just the individual(s) directly involved in the project, but how these individuals are connected to others: other individuals, organizations, networks etc. Understanding the dynamics and evolution of how all the involved parties and communities work together to solve the development issue is at the core of how IDRC supports capacity and captures capacity changes.

This evaluation framework starts with the different entry points (individual, organizational, networks) to the research problem (development challenge) and examines how IDRC determines/provides support to their partners to provide solutions: which abilities, to provide what solutions at which level? Other key questions that this framework might capture include: What are the dynamics among the entry points? What are the relationships that are created to help develop capacities? How do these relationships and capacities change over time? Developing a framework based on the various and evolving relationships and partnerships IDRC has established may help to shed light on how to capture capacity changes over time.

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## 1. Introduction

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) was established by the Parliament of Canada in 1970 to help developing countries find practical solutions to the social, economic and environmental development challenges they face. IDRC directs its support towards building and developing local capacity of researchers and research organizations/institutions in the South to empower them to build healthier, more equitable and more prosperous societies. Over the past two years, the Centre has sought to gain a deeper understanding of how it operationalizes its capacity support and what the results of this support have been. To date, the Centre has completed four phases of this project (see sidebar). Working collaboratively with IDRC's Evaluation Unit, Universalia carried out two previous phases<sup>1</sup>. The next step in this strategic evaluation is to use the evidence gathered from the previous two studies (along with other background pieces<sup>2</sup>) to produce a set of tools or typologies for staff and managers to use when planning, monitoring and evaluating capacity building interventions, such as factors for success, types of outputs and types of outcomes. Moving forward from these findings is the need to develop a framework that looks at IDRC's capacity support to individuals, groups, organizations and networks that can be tested in the field.

### IDRC's Strategic Evaluation of Capacity:

Phase I: Commissioning of background studies

Phase II: Conceptualizing Capacity and Identifying Factors of Success

Phase III: Results Achieved

Phase IV: Case Studies and General Findings

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is twofold:

- 1) To provide IDRC staff and managers with a useful set of tools or typologies to help them conceptualize, plan, monitor and evaluate capacity building interventions in their work;
- 2) To develop a framework that can capture how IDRC's support contributes to capacity development at the individual/group, organizational and network levels in the field.

Building on the previous work carried out in 2005 and 2006, this evaluation framework will look at the different entry points (individual, organizational, networks) to the research problem (development challenge) and examine how IDRC determines/provides support to the organization to provide solutions: which abilities, to provide solutions at which level? Other key questions that this framework should capture include: What are the dynamics among the entry points? What are the relationships that are created to help develop capacities? How do these relationships and capacities change over time?

### Features of this framework:

Focus is on individuals, organizations and networks rather than national institutions/state or society.

The starting point for this work is the research problem (development challenge) and how IDRC provides capacity support to individuals, organizations and/or networks to find solutions to the research problem.

Key questions will focus on the *dynamics* and *interactions* of the *relationships* between/among individuals, organizations and networks.

<sup>1</sup> Capacity Building at IDRC: Some Preliminary Thoughts. Charles Luthaus and Stephanie Neilson, April 2005 and Capacity Building at IDRC: Results and Factors Supporting Results, Universalia, March 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard, A. (2005). Mapping capacity building in IDRC, Evaluation Unit, Ottawa; Maessen, O. (2005). Intent to Build Capacity Through Research Projects: an examination of project objectives, abstract and appraisal documents, Draft report, prepared for IDRC's Evaluation Unit, April 2005; Morgan, Peter (2006). The Concept of Capacity (Draft Version): Study on Capacity, Change and Performance, ECDPM.

*IDRC's Mandate*

*...to initiate, encourage, support and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions (IDRC Annual Report, 2005-2006, p.9)*

## 2. Defining Capacity

Capacity building at IDRC is more than just another cluster of activities, projects or programs – it lies at the heart of their philosophical approach to international development: “*Capacity building is fundamental. It’s everything we do. It’s what IDRC is about*”. This approach emphasizes process as well as substance, one that emphasizes partnerships and the importance of building relationships:

Our partners in developing countries have confirmed that providing opportunities for researchers to improve their research skills, their research management skills, and their ability to ensure research results are applied in practice — capacity building — is arguably the most important and sustainable outcome of what we do. The growth of the people with whom we collaborate is an enduring contribution to long-term development<sup>3</sup>.

Building the Center’s local capacity is considered so important that it is one of IDRC’s three corporate objectives. In concrete terms, corporate strategy documents state that “...*the process of capacity building through research has to be understood within the larger context of capacity building – of institutions and of abilities to “do good research” with the capacity to manage funds, partner, communicate, and network. Projects that incorporate these other elements of capacity building will make for a more complete effort – and of necessity be larger in size and scope*”<sup>4</sup>.

Additional documents further state that “Canadian investments through IDRC have led to results in the following areas –

- 1) Improved capacity of individual researchers and research teams and
- 2) Institutional capacity building for research and research management<sup>5</sup>”

As we learned in the previous studies, the challenge for IDRC is how to define “capacity building”. IDRC does not have a corporate level or shared definition of capacity building. The literature is replete with definitions of capacity building/capacity development; yet even within the literature, there is no agreed upon or shared definition of capacity building/capacity development. If we start with Morgan’s definition (see sidebar) we begin to understand capacity building as something that happens at many different levels (individuals, groups, organizations, institutions), as something that involves change, and as a process that happens over time. The UNDP’s definition adds the idea of being able to solve development challenges or problems within each context (whatever that context may be) and to enable such change in a sustainable way.

Capacity building is the ability of individuals, groups, institutions and organizations to identify and solve development problems over time (Peter Morgan, 1996).

Capacity Development: The process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies increase their abilities: to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives; and to understand and deal with their development need in a broader context and in a sustainable manner (UNDP, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> IDRC. “*Briefing Book*”, February 2006: p.3-2.

<sup>4</sup> IDRC. Corporate Strategy and Program Framework 2005-2010, p.11-4, Para.124

<sup>5</sup> IDRC. “*Briefing Book*”, February 2006: p.3-1.

Working with these definitions gives us an opportunity to offer a working definition of capacity building that may be suitable and/or appropriate for the purpose of this framework:

Capacity is the ability of an individual, group, network, organization or society to identify and analyze situations, and to have the ability to perform critical tasks that enables it to solve development challenges over time and in a sustainable manner.

This definition captures a number of features or elements that may be of value to the development of the framework for IDRC:

- 1) Entry points or targets: individuals, groups, network, organizations
- 2) Critical development tasks: conducting research, managing research, using/applying research
- 3) Development challenge e.g.: poverty alleviation, food security and environmental sustainability
- 4) Sustainable change over time

### 3. Central Characteristics of Capacity at IDRC

The previous two pieces of work Universalialia carried out explored how staff and managers at IDRC conceptualize capacity, how they operationalize that understanding, and the results they have achieved in a small sample of projects. Findings from these studies indicate that although a lack of a corporate definition allows for flexibility in their work, and the research they support, it also makes tracking and reporting on “building local capacity” as one of IDRC’s corporate objectives challenging<sup>6</sup>. It also means that there is no commonly understood definition within IDRC to help guide program staff in carrying out their work. This can be problematic for some since no definition means that there are no guidelines or defined boundaries in terms of what’s allowed to be supported and what’s not; for example new staff or those not familiar with IDRC’s implicit norms or culture. It also makes it difficult to identify good practices, or to do M&E at both the program level and the agency level. In a similar vein, external reporting becomes a challenge, e.g. articulating to the wider general public what IDRC does and how it does it.

Given the complexities associated with defining “capacity”<sup>7</sup>, there are several central characteristics about how IDRC thinks of capacity that can be useful when developing a framework for planning, monitoring and evaluating IDRC’s contribution to capacity in the South. To help provide direction for this discussion, we mapped out the characteristics in terms of whose capacity, what capacities are being built (primarily), how these capacities are being built in terms of IDRC’s fundamental principles, and why these capacities are being built:

#### **Who: IDRC’s boundary partners, and their boundary partners’ boundary partners**

We learned from the previous phase that looked at the results of IDRC’s contributions to capacity building, that frequently the capacity building efforts are between IDRC’s partner and the beneficiaries of the support rather than IDRC’s direct partners (Universalialia, 2006, Finding 6, p.20). This is important in terms of developing the framework since it will help to identify and map out whose capacities, and where the results of the Centre’s efforts will be. This kind of approach supports peer-to-peer learning: we learned from the previous phase that peer-to-peer learning is an approach that was used in over 40% of the sample projects;

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<sup>6</sup> Interesting to note that the World Bank also has a similar issue: “*The recent Bank evaluation in Africa asks why the Bank can claim up to 50% of its disbursements in Africa are on capacity yet also admit that it has no accepted definition and no shared development practice centering on capacity*”. Quoted in Morgan, P., p. 3 (May 2006).

<sup>7</sup> For a much more compelling discussion on the issue of defining “capacity” see “The Concept of Capacity” (Draft Version), by Peter Morgan, May 2006.

the data suggest that this is an approach that is based on building/establishing relationships that are built on mutual trust and respect.

- 1) **Individuals:** For IDRC, the individual level often refers to individual researchers (project leader), or individuals as part of a research team e.g., senior researchers, junior researchers/graduate students. Sometimes, however, the individual level may also include social actors such as farmers, water engineers, women's groups or community leaders.
- 2) **Organizations:** Data from our previous interviews suggest that at the organizational level, IDRC frequently targets one or two individuals within an organization with the anticipation or intent that these individuals will influence changes within the organization themselves, rather than organizational capacities e.g., leadership and governance, structure or operations. In this context, it would appear that IDRC funds and supports *complementary activities* to the research project or program, such as project management, financial management, evaluation, fundraising or research information services, rather than organizational capacities.
- 3) **Networks:** IDRC defines networks as “*social arrangements of organizations and/or individuals linked together around a common theme or purpose, working jointly but allowing members to maintain their autonomy as participants*”<sup>8</sup>. Data from our previous studies seem to suggest that capacity building at this level is about building up the field of research and creating a critical mass of local capacity to carry out research in a particular field e.g., ecohealth research, urban agriculture research, or using a particular approach to research e.g., multidisciplinary, participatory, or in a particular region e.g., Latin America, South East Asia.

### What: Hard, technical capacities<sup>9</sup>

If we start with IDRC's statement that capacity building at IDRC is about the ability “to do good research”, followed with Anne Bernard's description of the kinds of capacities that IDRC supports to “do good research”, then it would seem that capacity building at IDRC is about working with partners and beneficiaries to expand capacities to do research, to manage research, and/or to disseminate/communicate research for others to use/apply in order to address the research problem/development challenge.

- 1) **To do research:** Conducting research, including the planning of a research project, using new or different research methodologies (e.g., participatory research), conducting the field work including data collection and analysis which may entail using different analytical frameworks to broaden the scope of the research (e.g., using gender analysis in economic or natural resource management fields), and being able to formulate findings in a manner that is appropriate to various target audiences.
- 2) **To manage research:** This refers to the professional and practical knowledge and experience of managing research projects, including implementation and monitoring of project activities including writing technical reports, financial reports and developing reporting and assessment systems, ensuring adequate and appropriate resources – both financial and human, facilitating training workshops (including logistics, travel, as well as ensuring facilitation skills and knowledge of the subject matter), and executing dissemination activities (workshops, conferences, articles).

<sup>8</sup> This definition of “networks” can be found on the Evaluation Unit's website at [http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-65285-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-65285-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html) (accessed January 30, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> The types of capacities in this section were identified by A. Bernard in her paper “Mapping Capacity Development in IDRC”, (2005).

- 3) **To disseminate or communicate research for others to use/apply:** This refers to the capacity to develop dissemination and communication strategies for different target audiences including policymakers, practitioners and other users. Communication and dissemination strategies may also include marketing and re-packaging the research for others to use or apply. For some, implementing dissemination and communication activities may involve having the capacity to develop inter-organizational linkages, collaborations and partnerships.

These harder capacities sometimes lead to what is often referred to as “softer capacities” such as legitimacy, trust, mutual respect, and credibility. The literature refers to these softer capacities as being critical for the *sustainability* of the benefits of the capacity being built (Zinke, 2006, Watson, 2006). However, these softer capacities are more difficult to capture since they are not usually as visible or as easily discernable for monitoring or evaluation purposes as the harder capacities (Watson, 2006: p.15). But looking back at some of our interviews in our previous study on IDRC’s results, IDRC’s partners often spoke about how the Centre has contributed to their legitimacy and credibility as researchers. Watson states that these capacities “depend on the quality of the relationships established by the actor/organization trying to develop its capacity within the wider system in which it operates” (Watson, 2006, p.15). Developing a framework that focuses on partnerships and relationships may help to mitigate the vagueness of such outcomes by capturing if and how the Centre influences the relationships of individuals, organizations and networks to operate in a certain way.

### **How: Learning by Doing**

We learned from the previous two studies that IDRC’s own notion of capacity building is “people-centered” and is based on an approach that places high importance on partnerships, local ownership and participation as being crucial to sustainability. This approach embraces “learning by doing” which provides the flexibility and long-term commitment that is necessary for change to occur. In this context, capacity building is about more than supporting “one-off training sessions”. It’s about theory and practice; thinking and doing. The Centre provides individuals the opportunities to acquire new knowledge about research, while simultaneously providing opportunities and incentives to use and apply the knowledge they have acquired in their own work. It will be important for us to examine in the cases whether or not this approach supports peer-to-peer learning, both North-South as well as South-South, based on building/establishing partnerships and relationships among the various actors (e.g., researchers and research users).

### **Why: Finding Solutions to the ‘Problematic’**

For IDRC, capacity is most often described as change occurring within the research problematic or field, rather than as changes at the institutional or systems level: “The starting point is the problem not the institution”. In this sense, it is understood that the research problematic is part of a research system, and the focus is on creating or building critical mass within the field or sector under study (e.g., trade, gender, food security) first and then to focus on the enabling environment through institutional capacity. This entails an understanding that the research problem or development challenge evolves and changes over time. As such, the entry point for change, and the capacities needed to find solutions to these challenges may also change over time.



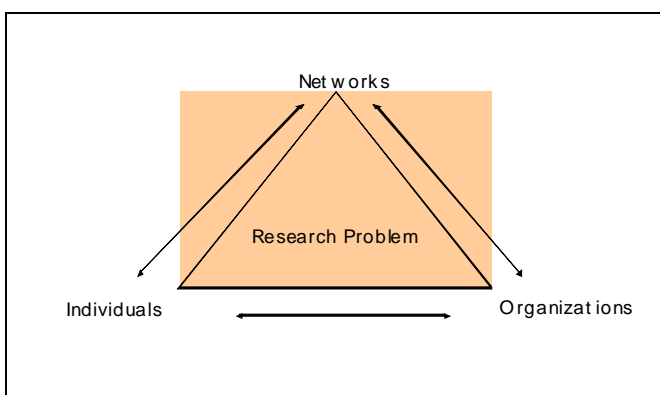
## 4. How IDRC Operationalizes Capacity Building

### 4.1 Theory of Change

The theory of change, or internal logic of how development projects affect change, for IDRC is about research capacity for development: building the capacity of researchers in developing countries to find solutions to build healthier, more equitable and more prosperous societies. Our data suggests that individuals are often (but not always) the entry point for building capacity, whether as individuals working within a university, organization or network. The implicit theory of change here is “trickle up” change, that by supporting individuals, these individuals will effect change within the organization and/or network in which they operate. The explicit theory of change is how the Centre supports and/or influences the interactions and collaborations between and among all the stakeholders involved in the change process.

The working hypothesis is that IDRC program staff/managers take a multi-pronged approach to build research capacities; using the research problem as the starting point they make choices about the entry point for program support – individuals, organizations and/or networks – which abilities to provide solutions at what level? In this sense, IDRC-supported capacity is more than just the individual(s) directly involved in the project, but how these individuals are connected to others: other individuals, organizations, networks etc. IDRC-supported researchers function within a broader research system and that *systems thinking* is brought to bear within the many capacity projects and activities IDRC supports.<sup>10</sup>

As stated in the CS+PF 2005-2010, IDRC discusses new ideas (or at least re-conceptualizes ideas from the past) about their theory of change as “complete capacity”: the need to pay attention to and fund multiple functions such as financial management, evaluation, communication, and resource expansion within a project-based approach. Complete capacity in this context involves looking at capacity development within projects/interventions from the perspective of understanding that research projects require “front-end” and “back-end” support just as much as supporting the conducting and managing of projects and the dissemination of findings. Without getting into the semantics of what “complete capacity” means, it is perhaps more prudent for us at this point to think about complete capacity as the capacity to do research-related activities rather than *complete* capacity.



<sup>10</sup> For more on systems thinking and capacity development, see “*The Design and Use of Capacity Development Indicators*”, Peter Morgan (CIDA Consultant): 1998.

## 4.2 Capacity Interventions

IDRC-supported capacity interventions generally focus at the individual level – individuals and/or teams/groups; even if the focus or target of the intervention is at the organizational/network level the focus of change is predominantly about the individual, and how that individual is able (or not able) to influence change within their organization or network. It is also about how individuals have the capacity to build or establish relationships and partnerships to influence change, and how these partnerships and relationships interact within the various settings (organizations, networks). These individuals are not working or operating alone; they work and/or are connected to others within the research problematic or system (i.e., environmental protection or rural health improvement). As Peter Morgan explains, individuals within the system can include *“members of the general public, specific beneficiaries, key stakeholders such as politicians, the media, other donors and indeed, any groups or individuals who are in a position to influence the direction and growth of performance”* (Morgan, 1998, p.4).

Capacity building interventions also tend to be more opportunistic in nature, rather than using a set approach. In his background piece, Gillespie (2005) found that IDRC staff and managers describe this as taking a “wait and see” approach that is based on the needs and vision of their partners. This kind of opportunistic approach lends itself to the idea that IDRC program staff draw on their own and their partners’ expertise and knowledge of the field under study and the region to make choices not only where to provide the capacity support i.e., individual, organizational, networks, but also how best to provide that support given the context, existing capacities and resources available.

Training courses
One-on-one exchanges
Study exchanges/visits
Conferences, workshops
Networks/networking
Awards programs
Linking senior – junior researchers
Recipients working with experts
Writing experiences
Technical Assistance
Centers of Excellence
Sustained mentoring
Small grants funding

The sections below describe some of the interventions IDRC staff discussed in the previous evaluation and background studies. Although they are discussed separately, it is important to note a couple of points. The first is that almost all interventions could be boiled down to supporting individuals. However, we understand that many of these interventions provide researchers the opportunity to meet and work with others in their field, and that many of these partnerships or relationships, and thus knowledge sharing and learning, continue long after the project ends. The second, and following on this last point, is that many of these interventions may be at work simultaneously within the same project and/or that projects may work at the various target levels i.e., individual, organizational, network, simultaneously or that the target levels might change over time.

### 4.2.1 Individuals

At the individual level, IDRC frequently supports a peer-to-peer learning approach – support given to researchers who build the capacity of others (researchers, community members, etc.). Capacity building interventions supported within the peer-to-peer learning approach include, but are not limited to: education and/or training (formal & informal) in various aspects of research processes and methodologies, and project management; sustained mentoring and one-on-one exchanges; collaborative efforts including networks/networking; and face-to-face interactions including workshops, conferences, seminars, and study exchanges/visits.

### 4.2.2 Organizations

Evidence from previous studies carried out for this strategic evaluation suggest that IDRC supports capacity interventions at the individual level around the operational and management aspects of organizations, rather than supporting organizational capacities per se i.e., leadership, governance, human resources. In this context, organizational capacities are often similar to those of individual capacities, with the expectation, however, that individuals will influence change within their organizations. An example of capacity interventions at the organizational level would be a small grants program, where IDRC provides assistance to a local organization to conceptualize, implement and administer a grants program to researchers at the country or regional level. This kind of support may extend beyond capacity to “conduct research” to include how to plan, implement, manage and monitor a program or project at an organizational level that will result also in broadening the field of research itself by the fact that 10 or 15 researchers generated new knowledge in the field or applied new approaches to the research question.

IDRC has also been in the business of creating organizations in order to ensure that the infrastructure, resources and operating space that researchers require to carry out their work is available to them, at times in environments that may be indifferent to research.

Another aspect of IDRC’s capacity support to organizations is their support towards building/establishing organizational inter-linkages and consortia among their partners. One way of providing capacity support to organizational linkages is through a network, more of which is discussed below. Although networks tend to be more about individuals as members, data from some of the studies carried out (Bernard, 2005; Gillespie, 2005) provide examples of cases when “strong institutions are positioned as network hubs to coordinate and support the work of weaker institutions” (Gillespie, 2005, p.47), thus producing a ripple affect of peer-to-peer learning and support. Not only do these arrangements provide support to weaker institutions, they also provide opportunities of harnessing the existing capacities and talents found within stronger institutions (Gillespie, 2005).

### 4.2.3 Networks

Like capacity support to organizations, IDRC’s capacity support for networks often boils down to supporting individuals located at various institutions (e.g., universities, think tanks, NGOs) in various ways (site visits, training courses, conferences). As a capacity intervention, networks provide individual researchers the opportunity to collaborate with others, especially when there is collaboration among researcher with different disciplinary backgrounds. In some cases, networks give researchers, particularly individual researchers, the advantage of being able to draw on a wider system of support than is available to them in their home institutions. Researchers who may be isolated within their own setting are able to connect to a community of practice that can help them move the research and the ideas forward (Gillespie, 2005). Capacity interventions within a network context would include sustained mentoring, working with experts, linking senior and junior researchers, training courses, workshops and conferences, technical assistance, and study exchanges/visits.

“A good example of both a mechanism and a method, networks inter-link knowledge and people for the purposes of creating, strengthening, sustaining or extending research-related capacities and mobilizing resources. They are strongest as capacity activities where they act to facilitate lateral and vertical cross-fertilization of ideas, practical experience and lessons-learned”. (A. Bernard, 2005, p. 31.)

## 5. Results of IDRC'S Capacity Support

One of the key findings from our previous study on results and factors of results (Universalia, 2006) found that the Centre's capacity support is often between IDRC's partners' partners, rather than directly between IDRC and their partners. This means that when seeking results achieved, evaluators will have to look further down the results chain towards the Centre's boundary partners' boundary partners in order to adequately capture the changes occurring. In this context, the framework needs to capture if and how IDRC's boundary partners are building the capacities of researchers, rather than if and how IDRC is building the capacity of researchers.

### 5.1 Types of Outputs

Sample data from our previous study (Universalia, 2006) found a wide range of outputs from research projects, including research papers, peer-reviewed journal articles, books and other forms of publications that can be used to influence policies and/or technologies. In addition, many researchers were trained in new approaches or tools to research and/or evaluation. Frequently training materials and other curricula were designed developed and provided partners and beneficiaries with the knowledge and resources that could assist them to carry out their own training courses.

Other outputs include databases and systems to record, manage and track data from the research being carried out. Many of the people developing such databases and systems were found to improve their capacity to (1) either develop the system itself and/or (2) to enter and/or analyze the data being recorded in the system.

### 5.2 Types of Capacity Outcomes

Most of IDRC's research projects are focused on improving "research capacity" in their various boundary partners. Improving research capacity involves looking for changes in boundary partners' behaviour – changes that are considered to be capacity changes. These are both internal behaviours as well as changes in relationships between and among boundary partners, both IDRC's boundary partners as well as IDRC's boundary partners' boundary partners. These changes in behaviours and relationships are called outcomes. For example, building the capacity of women or farmers who became more capable of participating in decision-making processes in the community. Other examples include how these skills and changes in behaviours made a difference in relationships with others like how these groups worked with local institutions. What these examples illustrate is that most often for IDRC, capacity outcomes are downstream and often lay with IDRC's boundary partners, rather than with IDRC directly. In these instances, IDRC's research support is about *improving or expanding the research capacities* of their partners, who then influence others to change their behaviours and relationships, rather than creating new research capacities of their partners directly. However, that is not to say that there are not cases of IDRC supporting the improvement of their partners' research capacities. In some cases, for example, IDRC provides training in a specific skill, such as gender analysis, fundraising or evaluation for the benefit of their partners, as well as their partners' partners. In these cases, IDRC is improving or expanding the research capacities of their partners as well.

In many cases, IDRC-supported research *generates new knowledge* in the field under study, which can lead to new relationships between various actors and their organizations, networks and institutions. It can also lead to new ideas, approaches and tools that can influence policies and technologies which, in turn, can lead to new thoughts on solutions to the research problem/development challenge. In a few cases there may also be examples of development outcomes; for example, whether or not the health researchers that IDRC supports use or apply new knowledge or tools that are associated with improved health (a development result).

In some cases, the new knowledge, behaviours, or relationships affect current organizational or state/country *policies and practices*. For example, a researcher or a network of researchers may influence how universities think about gender and natural resource management, which affects how the courses are taught (multidisciplinary rather than a single discipline).

The following table (Exhibit 5.1) provides some examples of outputs and outcomes produced by the different programs and the various interventions used at different levels. The examples provided here are based on data from our previous studies; however the list given is not exhaustive.

**Exhibit 5.1 Typology of Capacity Results at IDRC: An Evidence-Based Example**

CAPACITY LEVEL TARGETED	IDRC UNIT PROVIDING SUPPORT	CAPACITY SUPPORT ACTIVITY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
Individual	Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small grants programs</li> <li>• Awards programs</li> <li>• Training courses</li> <li>• Conferences/Workshops</li> <li>• One-on-one exchanges</li> <li>• Study exchange/visit</li> <li>• Networks/networking</li> <li>• Linking junior-senior researchers</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> <li>• Writing Experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research papers</li> <li>• Revised proposals</li> <li>• Databases/data entry systems</li> <li>• Journal articles</li> <li>• Policy briefs</li> <li>• Books/book chapters</li> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Groups/teams formed</li> <li>• Websites/web-based learning tools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying/using new research methodology</li> <li>• Working in new areas of research</li> <li>• Research team leaders now managing projects</li> <li>• Using new knowledge to create a new training course</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating New Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masters theses contributed to knowledge of field</li> <li>• Generating new knowledge in a field of research</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening research/management/negotiation skills</li> <li>• Empowering individuals/groups to lobby government</li> <li>• New knowledge to increase the sophistication of the discussion/debates in the field</li> </ul>

CAPACITY LEVEL TARGETED	IDRC UNIT PROVIDING SUPPORT	CAPACITY SUPPORT ACTIVITY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conferences/Workshops</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> <li>• Training courses</li> <li>• One-on-one exchange</li> <li>• Awards</li> <li>• Writing Experiences</li> <li>• Networks/networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation research papers/reports</li> <li>• Revised proposals</li> <li>• Journal articles</li> <li>• Books/book chapters</li> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• Groups/teams formed</li> <li>• Websites/web-based learning tools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying/using new evaluation methodology</li> <li>• Working in new areas of research/evaluation</li> <li>• Using new knowledge to create new training courses</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating New Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generating new knowledge in the evaluation field</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening research/management/negotiation skills</li> <li>• New knowledge to increase the sophistication of the discussion/debates in the field</li> </ul>
Individual (cont'd)	Partnership and Business Development Department (PBDD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conferences/Workshops</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> <li>• Training courses</li> <li>• One-on-one exchanges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Groups/teams formed</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying new fundraising skills to secure new funds or other resources</li> <li>• Managing new partnerships or relationships with new donors</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening negotiation/fundraising skills</li> </ul>

CAPACITY LEVEL TARGETED	IDRC UNIT PROVIDING SUPPORT	CAPACITY SUPPORT ACTIVITY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
	Research Information Management Services Division (RIMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training courses</li> <li>• One-on-one exchanges</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Literature searches</li> <li>• Revised proposals</li> <li>• Revised literature reviews</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production of high quality/scientifically sound literature reviews</li> <li>• Production of high quality/scientifically sound proposals</li> <li>• Accessing new sources of information to apply/use in research/evaluation proposals, reports, to solve research problems</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating New Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generating new knowledge in a field of research</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New knowledge to increase the sophistication of the discussion/debates in the field</li> <li>• Strengthening skills to access information, library resources using technologies</li> </ul>
	Grant Administration Division (GAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training Courses</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> <li>• Workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Reporting on data</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying new skills in financial management to research projects</li> <li>• Applying new skills in administration to manage research projects</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening skills in financial management</li> <li>• Using technologies to administer projects</li> </ul>



CAPACITY LEVEL TARGETED	IDRC UNIT PROVIDING SUPPORT	CAPACITY SUPPORT ACTIVITY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
Organizational	Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small Grants Programs</li> <li>• Awards programs</li> <li>• Training courses</li> <li>• Conferences/Workshops</li> <li>• Networks/networking</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Databases/data entry systems</li> <li>• Computer network systems</li> <li>• Creating inter-organizational links</li> <li>• Creating intra-organizational links</li> <li>• New organizations created</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing how universities teach research courses (multidisciplinary approaches)</li> <li>• Organizational program shift from natural science to social change/social science</li> <li>• Changing how organizations work together to share/exchange information, research results</li> <li>• Using training learned in own organizations</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening management skills to manage/administer projects</li> <li>• Sharing &amp; learning at an organizational level via new technologies, systems, networks</li> </ul>

CAPACITY LEVEL TARGETED	IDRC UNIT PROVIDING SUPPORT	CAPACITY SUPPORT ACTIVITY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training courses</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> <li>• Conferences/Workshops</li> <li>• Networks/networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Databases/data entry systems</li> <li>• Creating inter-organizational links</li> <li>• Creating intra-organizational links</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using organizational learning/reflection for organizational development</li> <li>• Changing how organizations work together to share, exchange information, research results</li> <li>• Using training learned in own organizations</li> <li>• Creation of a “virtual organization” to train people in evaluation methodologies</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating New Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal knowledge about organizational effectiveness for strategic planning, organizational development</li> <li>• Using new data systems to record and report on results at an organizational level or program level</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening evaluation capacities to carry out methodologically sound evaluations in the South</li> <li>• Strengthening facilitation skills to carry out training, workshops, evaluations</li> </ul>
Organizational (cont'd)	Partnership and Business Development Division (PBDD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training courses</li> <li>• Conference/Workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Creating inter-organizational links</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying new fundraising skills to secure new funds or other resources at the organizational level providing a source of institutional stability</li> <li>• Managing new partnerships or relationships with new donors, new research partners</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating New Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New knowledge about fundraising and resource expansion, including establishing new partnerships at regional levels</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening resource expansion/resource mobilization skills</li> </ul>

CAPACITY LEVEL TARGETED	IDRC UNIT PROVIDING SUPPORT	CAPACITY SUPPORT ACTIVITY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
	Research Information Management Services Division (RIMSD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video conferences</li> <li>• Web-based workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Creating inter-organizational links</li> <li>• Web-based learning tools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with other organizations to share/access information and sources available via internet</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating New Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New ways of managing research information, knowledge management</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening research information management and knowledge management skills</li> </ul>
Organizational (cont'd)	Grant Administration Division (GAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Databases/data entry systems</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying/using financial management training to research projects and programs throughout the organization</li> <li>• Applying data systems for reporting at an organizational level</li> <li>• New organizational policies for accounting, financial management</li> <li>• Organizations capable of securing funds from other donors based on demonstrated administrative strengths to manage funds</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening financial management and administration skills for research management</li> <li>• Strengthening database/data entry skills for reporting</li> </ul>

CAPACITY LEVEL TARGETED	IDRC UNIT PROVIDING SUPPORT	CAPACITY SUPPORT ACTIVITY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
Networks	Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small grants programs</li> <li>• Awards programs</li> <li>• Training courses</li> <li>• Conferences/Workshops</li> <li>• One-on-one exchanges</li> <li>• Study exchange/visit</li> <li>• Networks/networking</li> <li>• Linking junior-senior researchers</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> <li>• Writing Experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research papers</li> <li>• Revised proposals</li> <li>• Databases/data entry systems</li> <li>• Journal articles</li> <li>• Policy briefs</li> <li>• Books/book chapters</li> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Groups/teams formed</li> <li>• Websites/web-based learning tools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multidisciplinary teams working on research problem</li> <li>• Establishment of networks as a different way of working on a research problem</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating New Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generating new knowledge on a research problem at a regional level</li> <li>• Several institutions using/applying a common methodology to conduct the research towards a common goal</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New coordination skills to coordinate the network</li> </ul>
Networks (cont'd)	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training courses</li> <li>• Conferences/Workshops</li> <li>• One-on-one exchanges</li> <li>• Study exchange/visit</li> <li>• Networks/networking</li> <li>• Linking junior-senior researchers</li> <li>• Technical Assistance</li> <li>• Writing Experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research papers</li> <li>• Revised proposals</li> <li>• Databases/data entry systems</li> <li>• Journal articles</li> <li>• Books/book chapters</li> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Groups/teams formed</li> <li>• Websites/web-based learning tools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different players now working together to institutionalize the use of/training in evaluation methodology</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating New Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different players working together to create new training courses on evaluation methodologies</li> <li>• Generating new knowledge on evaluation issues around research for development at regional, global levels</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New coordination skills to coordinate the network</li> </ul>

CAPACITY LEVEL TARGETED	IDRC UNIT PROVIDING SUPPORT	CAPACITY SUPPORT ACTIVITY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
	Partnership and Business Development Division (PBDD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conferences/Workshops</li> <li>Technical Assistance</li> <li>Training courses</li> <li>One-on-one exchanges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People trained</li> <li>Groups/teams formed</li> <li>Creating inter-organizational links</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applying new fundraising skills to secure new funds or other resources</li> <li>Managing new partnerships or relationships with new donors</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating New Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New knowledge about fundraising and resource expansion, including establishing new partnerships at regional/global levels</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthening negotiation/fundraising skills</li> </ul>
	Research Information Management Services Division (RIMSD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video Conferences</li> <li>Web-based Workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People trained</li> <li>Creating inter-organizational links</li> <li>Web-based learning tools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with other individuals, groups, organizations to share/access information and sources available via internet</li> </ul> <p><b>Generating New Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New ways of managing research information, knowledge management within and across organizations</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthening research information management and knowledge management skills</li> </ul>

CAPACITY LEVEL TARGETED	IDRC UNIT PROVIDING SUPPORT	CAPACITY SUPPORT ACTIVITY	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
Networks (cont'd)	Grant Administration Division (GAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training courses</li> <li>• Workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People trained</li> <li>• Databases/data entry systems</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affecting Policy/Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying/using financial management training to research projects and programs throughout the organization</li> <li>• Applying data systems for reporting at an organizational level</li> <li>• New organizational policies for accounting, financial management</li> <li>• Organizations capable of securing funds from other donors based on demonstrated administrative strengths to manage funds</li> </ul> <p><b>Expanding Capacities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening financial management and administration skills for research management</li> <li>• Strengthening database/data entry skills for reporting</li> </ul>

## 6. Good Practices for Capacity Outcomes

We have learned from the previous work that both Centre staff and partners identified, or spoke about, a number of factors that contribute to the success of building research capacities. These “good practices” begin to capture some of the elements of IDRC’s support that staff and partners view as being critical to building sustainable research organizations and systems. The following table highlights elements based on IDRC’s principles such as persistence, partnerships, following a locally driven agenda and harnessing existing capacities.

**Exhibit 6.1 Good Practices that Contribute to IDRC’s Capacity Building (adapted from DAC, 2003 and IDRC’s Corporate Assessment Framework, 2006).**

GOOD PRACTICES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO CAPACITY BUILDING	MANIFESTED IN IDRC THROUGH:
<b>IDRC characteristics</b>	
Persistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustained mentoring</li> <li>• Continuity, prolonged engagement</li> <li>• Iterative learning process</li> <li>• Aim to build legitimacy, credibility and trust</li> </ul>
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding arrangements</li> <li>• Location within Canadian government system</li> <li>• Agility to respond to developing country needs</li> </ul>
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay engaged under difficult circumstances</li> <li>• Provide legitimacy, credibility and trust</li> </ul>
<b>Building Partnerships</b>	
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networks of individuals and organizations/institutions</li> <li>• Inter-organizational linkages</li> <li>• Face-to-face interactions between/among IDRC staff and researchers</li> <li>• Providing legitimacy and credibility to partners and beneficiaries</li> </ul>
Mutual Peer-to-Peer Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face-to-face interactions</li> <li>• Respect the value system and foster self-esteem of IDRC partners</li> <li>• Range of expertise among IDRC staff</li> <li>• On-going learning and adaptation</li> </ul>
<b>Harnessing Existing Capacities</b>	
Strategic Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scan locally and globally, reinvent locally – regional presence to determine existing capacities</li> <li>• Staff knowledge of regions</li> </ul>
Build on existing capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustained mentoring – provide long-term support beyond “one-off training” sessions</li> <li>• Regional presence – to determine existing capacities</li> <li>• Use local, existing capacities rather than creating parallel systems</li> </ul>

GOOD PRACTICES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO CAPACITY BUILDING	MANIFESTED IN IDRC THROUGH:
<b>Relevance of the Problem</b>	
Locally-driven agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local ownership</li> <li>• Local and global participation in determining the agenda</li> <li>• Programs continually evolving to meet developing country demands</li> <li>• Bring southern perspectives and voices to the analysis of development challenges</li> <li>• Support devolvement of major research initiatives when appropriate</li> </ul>

## 7. Capturing Capacity Changes

Much of IDRC's work is based on the principle of effective collaboration (see sidebar). As such, the framework for the case studies will need to capture the capacity changes in terms of the interactions and dynamics among the different entry points: individuals, organization and network (if applicable), and if and how IDRC contributes to those

capacity changes. As such, the case studies will need to explore what collaborative efforts were established and achieved throughout the project, and whether these collaborations were established to achieve particular development tasks: to do research, to manage research or to communicate/disseminate the research

IDRC has always understood that development research is a collaborative venture. The Centre has encouraged partnerships that foster open and equitable participation, and facilitate an easy interaction between research insight and practical application. IDRC therefore supports not only individual researchers or research teams, but networks of researchers and research users. These networks are important ways of sharing results and applications, stimulating debate on important scientific questions, and linking researchers with policymakers and other research users (IDRC, February 2006:p.5-1).

to others to use and/or apply in policy and/or practice. Since our understanding of capacity is that it changes and shifts over time, the case studies will also need to illustrate how these collaborative efforts evolved and shifted over time, and if and how the research problem also evolved/shifted over time.

Evaluators carrying out these case studies should consider how the individuals, organizations, or networks involved in the project define "capacity". Building on this, evaluators could also provide rich descriptions of the central characteristics of "capacity" – whose capacity is being targeted, what capacities (hard, soft), and how these capacities are being supported (e.g., peer-learning). This may create a thread throughout the cases that could tell the story of if and how the IDRC-supported capacity approaches and interventions are effective at the individual, organizational and network levels, and if and how these changes endure beyond IDRC's direct partner to their partners' partners.

The following table offers some possible direction and questions as to how evaluators could capture this information.



**Exhibit 7.1 Possible Questions for Case Studies**

MAJOR QUESTIONS	DEFINING CAPACITY	CHARACTERISTICS OF CAPACITY	OPERATIONALIZATION OF CAPACITY	RESULTS
What led to the project?	<p>Was the development concern, or capacity concern clearly identified?</p> <p>What is the intent of the project?</p>	<p>Who is (was) involved – individuals, organizations, networks? How are (were) they involved? What is the relationship to IDRC?</p> <p>What kinds of capacity were addressed (to do research, to manage research, to communicate/disseminate research)?</p> <p>What was (is) the overall understanding of how capacity changes (what is the theory of change)?</p>	How was the approach to capacity designed? Was there a set approach or was it a “mixed bag” of approaches?	How were capacity changes defined?
What happened during the project?	<p>How effective are the activities/interventions to the capacity problem or research problem being addressed?</p> <p>How relevant and/or appropriate are the activities/interventions to the capacity problem or research problem being addressed?</p>	<p>What kind of activities and interventions are being supported? How were the activities/interventions designed?</p> <p>What (if any) collaborations (partnerships, relationships made) were achieved through the project? How effective were they? What roles did people involved play? How did these change over time? Did they lead to other/new collaborations with others?</p>	<p>Were there any collaborations between/among different IDRC programs/units (e.g., Programs, Evaluation Unit, PBDD, Communications, RIMS)?</p> <p>Did the approach to capacity in the project evolve over time? How did the approach evolve?</p>	What outputs were provided/produced by the project? At what level (individual, organizational, network)?
What happened after the project?	<p>Has the research problem evolved or changed over time since the project ended?</p> <p>How has your definition of capacity changed since the project ended?</p>	<p>How effective was the approach to capacity change?</p> <p>How effective were the activities or interventions to capacity?</p> <p>How did your understanding of how capacity changes evolved since the end of the project?</p>	Have the partnerships or relationships made during the project endured after the project? To what extent? For what purpose?	<p>What are the capacity outcomes (improving/expanding research capacities, generating new knowledge, affecting policy and/or practice) of the project?</p> <p>Are these reflected in partners’ partners?</p> <p>How does capacity change endure?</p>

## 7.1 Approach

For this next phase of the strategic evaluation, it is envisaged that case studies will be carried out in the field to provide in-depth stories of capacity changes with rich descriptions of if and how these changes occurred. The case study research strategy lends itself to a deeper exploration of real-life complex interactions in a holistic manner:

The case study] is a way of organizing data so as to keep the focus on the totality. It tries to consider the interrelationships among people, institutions, events and beliefs. Rather than breaking them down into separate items for analysis, the case study seeks to keep all

elements of the situation in sight at once. The watchword is *holistic* (Weiss, C., 1997, p.261).

Analyzing the interrelationships among people, institutions and events will be critical in these cases that want to explore the (shifting) linkages between individuals, organizations and networks to capture the capacity changes that have occurred and continue to evolve within their specific contexts.

The framework will be tested in at least five (5) cases looking at organizations or networks that IDRC has supported for a minimum of (5) years. The criteria for case selection will be based on the following:

- Type of organization receiving funding (for example: research institute, university, NGO)
- Long term relationship with IDRC (more than 5 years of IDRC support) and currently receiving support
- Received high(est) levels of IDRC funding
- Based in the South
- Balanced Program Area coverage to the extent possible (SEP, ENRM, ICT4D)
- Balanced geographic coverage to the extent possible (LACRO, ASRO, MERO, SARO, ESARO, WARO)
- Preferably cases not using projects that have been included in other recent strategic evaluations (i.e., policy study, network study)
- Variety of the type of capacity support provided (Program Branch, Evaluation Unit, Resource Mobilization and Partnership Building, Library etc.)

Qualitative methods will be the primary source of data collection, including semi-structured interviews with staff, partners and beneficiaries being the main sources of data. Document review of key project documents (see sidebar) will also be critical to gain an in-depth understanding of the research problem including the capacity problem addressed by the IDRC-supported project. It is through the documentation and the interviews that evaluators will be able to construct an evidence-based story of whose capacity changed, what capacities changed, how they changed, and if those changes are enduring.

#### Key Documents for Review in Case Studies:

Trip Reports  
 Project Completion Reports (PCRs)  
 Technical Reports/Final Reports  
 Evaluation Reports  
 Project Appraisal Document(s)  
 Proposal(s), including revised proposals  
 Other supporting documentation (including for example, e-mails)

## 7.2 Challenges

A key challenge when conducting case studies will be to design questions that will allow the evaluators to easily distil the data in such a way as to tell the story of the capacity problem and how effectively it was addressed by IDRC and their partner. This will require rich descriptions of the project(s), and those involved (roles, responsibilities), and the partnerships/relationships established to ensure that the case is able to capture the capacity changes that occurred and in some cases, may still be on-going after the project has ended. Examining the case from the perspective of the capacity problem may also help to mitigate issues of baseline information such as what capacities existed before IDRC funding and how the evaluators can attribute the capacity changes to IDRC funding.

Another issue that may arise in these cases (as they have previously in other studies, e.g., the policy study cases) is the problem associated with donor-recipient relationships. Partners and their beneficiaries may be overly positive of the outcomes of the research arising from the fear that future funding may be at stake. The evaluators will need to stress that the cases are examining how IDRC has supported or influenced capacity changes, and based on what they've learned from the cases, how they can better provide the support needed by their partners and beneficiaries.